

## Medicine in the Public Press

**Will Humanity Get Rid of Sleep?**—Some doctors of more or less prominence are gaining unenviable notoriety for themselves because of loose and spectacular statements about health matters. They do not always give out authorized interviews to the press. They are too clever for that. They make ambiguous statements before medical gatherings and permit their press agents to interpret these statements to the press in a spectacular manner.

One of the best recent examples of this is the extensively quoted and editorialized statement that the doctors will soon be able to do away with the necessity for sleep. Of course, these doctors did not make such a statement, but they did make statements that lent themselves to the interpretation the press put upon them.

For shame! Some of our so-called leaders seem to have lost their power of discriminating between notoriety and fame.

**The Physical Basis of Disease**—Under this caption a writer using the pen name of "The Research Worker, Stanford University," contributes a most interesting, entertaining and thought-provoking article to the Scientific Monthly. The article is a purported conversation between travelers in a Pullman smoker.

"The responsibility (for confusion in health matters) rests with the general public. Any garage that treated all broken cars by massaging the rear tire would go bankrupt. The public has sufficient knowledge of automobiles to realize the absurdity of such a method. At some time, some car owner may possibly have thawed out his radiator with a hot-water bottle. He might possibly be induced to write a testimonial endorsing the hot-water bottle method. But no business man would spend hundreds of thousands of dollars in manufacturing a special automobile hot-water bottle, in the expectation of selling thousands of these bottles to car owners for the treatment of all automobile troubles. The public, however, liberally supports hundreds of equally absurd medical devices."

"It's good business," said the manufacturer, "to give the public what it wants."

"I doubt if it's a good business policy in medicine. Hundreds of thousands of preventable deaths are caused by this policy. The economic loss is millions of dollars annually. This is eventually a drain on all legitimate business."

"There are adequate laws governing medical fakes," said the lawyer.

"The laws are neither intelligent, adequate nor well enforced. They never will be till the general public has sufficient knowledge of fundamental facts to intelligently judge medical claims."

"In the first place," said the research worker, "is there any one group of facts on which all physicians agree and which all practitioners must understand and use, no matter to what school of medicine they belong? There is such a group of facts in automobile repairing. Mechanics differ in methods, skill and efficiency in locating trouble and making repairs, but they all base their methods on an understanding of the physical nature of automobile trouble. A short circuit, a leaky valve, a cracked cylinder, deposit from inferior oil or gasoline. There is an equally fundamental group of facts in the human repair business."

"Suppose a physician doesn't accept these facts," said the lawyer.

"If a mechanic didn't believe in the existence of a short circuit, would you employ him to fix your car? His disbelief stamps him at once as incompe-

tent. A short circuit is a fundamental mechanical fact. There are equally fundamental biological facts in human disease.

The "research worker" then gives a fascinating story of the structural defects and their influence in producing disease.

**Chiropractic Certificate of Illness**—On the letter-head of ———, D. C., and several other initials we do not pretend to understand, we have a certificate of illness (forwarded us by a member), which reads as follows:

"To Whom It may Concern—Mrs. ——— has been under my care since May 22-24, a depleted physical condition. To my personal knowledge I know that during her absence from work it was wholly do to her Physical inability."

**Los Angeles County Public Health Department Establishing a Bureau for the Care of Pre-school Age Children**—According to press dispatches, a county health bureau under the direction of the county health officer, with a primary purpose of caring for and improving the health of young children, shortly may be formed as a result of negotiations pending between the health officer and the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company. The news dispatches quote Lee K. Frankel, medical director of the local welfare bureau of the insurance company, as being sponsor of this movement. The press dispatches were forwarded to Doctor Fleisher and his comment invited. In his reply he states: "These articles greatly exaggerate the work we are doing. We have not suggested a movement of this type."

**Chiropractors' Dilemma**—When the chiropractors passed the initiative authorizing themselves to license themselves to practice medicine in California, they made the law too good. Among other provisions, in order to become a member of the chiropractors licensing board, the chiropractor must have practiced his dogma for at least three years **legally** in California. There were no legalized chiropractors in the state, so after a lot of wrangling, the Governor appointed a board of chiropractors who were licensed as drugless practitioners, and they began to function. Suit was brought, and the courts questioned the legality of this board, and they were ousted by a decision of the Supreme Court of the state. Recently the Governor has appointed another board made up of licentiates licensed by the first illegally constituted board. There will be another fine point to determine whether chiropractors licensed by an illegal board are actually licensed. One thing is certain: they are still far from the law which says they shall be licensed for at least three years. In any event, it is a fine mess.

The Governor is quoted as saying, in making his appointments: "I have appointed a board which is representative of the various chiropractic factions of the state, and all the men appointed have the necessary educational and professional qualifications. They represent different schools of chiropractics as the law requires, and are licentiates."

"The law limited me to persons who had been licensed by the first board, and no other persons could be considered. I believe this board will function to the best interests of the profession."

This new board consists of J. K. Gilkerson, Glendale; H. D. McFarland, Los Angeles; W. W. Tait, Berkeley; James Compton, Oakland; Wilfrid Clayton, San Francisco.

**Should Dirty Medical Linen be Washed in Public?**—The shortcomings of physicians are better known to physicians, of course, than they are to anyone else. There are plenty of them, and one of the efforts of

the whole profession is to reduce them as much as possible and as consistently as possible.

Since the campaign for educating everybody in health has gotten under way, a great many physicians seem to forget that there is no way of limiting the printed word to that part of the public they would like to have read any special message. Some of the things published by physicians, and even by medical organizations, are doing a great deal of harm to the cause we should all espouse. Some of the printed statements, ostensibly intended solely for physicians, attract the attention of public press editors and thus give to the writer a notoriety that he could not otherwise obtain and which, unfortunately, is sometimes looked upon by him as fame. Statements made by the most honest physicians, and with the most laudable purposes, when they get into print are liable to be utilized in ways that embarrass the physician and the profession to which he belongs.

One of the best examples of this is seen in a recent popular magazine which has millions of readers. The article, read by a physician and published in a medical journal, was abstracted in a way to reflect adversely upon physicians everywhere. In these abstracts are quoted some such statements as the following: "The well-trained doctor of medicine should be able to acquire the technique of spinal 'adjustments' and other manipulative procedures at the expense of very little time or effort. **If the public is going to continue to demand that sort of thing, then there can be no great harm in supplying it.** By refusing to do so, the profession is calling down upon its head undeserved epithets."

The reaction that many readers get from this is that the medical profession should sell the kind of services the public wants, regardless of whether they are right or wrong. We do not believe that one physician in 1000 will endorse statements like the one quoted, and we are convinced that at least 75 per cent will condemn in measured terms, statements suggesting such dangerous sentiments.

**Dietetics and Medical Schools**—P. M. Lovell, N. D., writes in the Los Angeles Times, in discussing dietetics in medical schools that the drugless practitioners are better educated in "natural diet" than are physicians. This because the drugless schools make a specialty of teaching diet, while the medical schools do not. "What they do teach," says this author, "is confined to unscientific calory theories, 'balanced rations,' and metabolism tests. Natural diet is utterly foreign to their curriculum."

"But, doctor, is it not true that the number of hours that the medical man spends in school is greater than that of the drugless physician?"

"True! but most of his work is spent in the study of disease so that he is not very familiar with the phenomena of health."

"As I write this article I have before me the 1923-24 catalogue of a Class A medical school of California. This medical school belongs to one of the finest universities in this country, and is thoroughly representative of the most approved of the A. M. A. schools. To get into this medical school one must have a high-school diploma showing four years' work. Then one must complete three years of preliminary preparation before being permitted to enter the school. The medical course itself consists of five years' work. Of the entire total of five school years in which every conceivable medical subject is taught, there is a total of twenty-four hours of dietetic lectures given.

"Think of it! Over 5000 hours spent on every conceivable subject apropos to disease, and a total of twenty-four hours spent in the study of the foundation science of physical health—dietetics. Is it any wonder, trained as he is, that the orthodox medical doctor, governing great hospitals and sanatoria, gives

such colossally stupid dietetic advice as is embraced in modern nutritional theories."

#### **Chiropractors Plan Health Education Campaign—**

What the press quotes as the Southern California branch of the University of California association of chiropractors held a meeting in San Diego recently, and decided to enter the game of educating the public in health matters. Their first objective is to clarify the definition of chiropractic so that there may be no misunderstanding between the chiropractors and the seekers after health. "Honest advertising" will be another method to separate a class of pseudos from actual chiropractors. "This will help to clean the chiropractic house of those who are using chiropractic as a graft."

**The E. R. A. Bubble Explodes**—The investigation of Abrams' methods, which has been under way by the Scientific American for over a year, is nearing its close. In the August issue the editor says that:

"This will bring 'Our Abrams Investigation' to what we regard as a highly successful end. We went into it hoping that we might be able to give our endorsement to the electronic system, hoping that we might find it to be a major development of twentieth century science, fully prepared for the necessity of heralding it to the world as such. When we find that the facts lead us merely to an exposure of the greatest single piece of organized quackery in the history of medicine, however, we feel that our service to the community in so reporting is as large as though the outcome had been that which, a priori, was the more to be desired."

**Gland Transplantation Rejuvenates**—According to press reports, Dr. Stanley claims only a negligible percentage of failures in his 200 patients rejuvenated by gland transplantations. The statement was made, says the report, in a lecture before the students attending the summer session of the University of California. The thought is offered that wide publicity of the enormous prevalence of sexual impotence in California is liable to counteract somewhat the more constructive advertising of our climate and other tourist-drawing virtues.

#### **A Projected Innovation in Nursing Education—**

According to press dispatches, the Southern Branch of the University of California and the Los Angeles County Health Department are co-operating to establish "a field-work school of nursing." Preliminary announcements regarding this project state that students of nursing will receive their theoretical and academy instruction in the university and the practical experience under the auspices of the county health department. Among the subjects to be stressed during the students' "intern" nursing service are, "prenatal, infants, child, pre-school, school, and communicable diseases nursing." Chief Nurse Simpson, the head of the school, is quoted as having said that the theories of nursing will be taught in the regular university semesters in the future instead of only in the summer sessions as in the past.

**"Doctor" W. A. Lampe**—One "Dr." W. A. Lampe, "feature specialist," was called by the defense in the trial of Mrs. Grace Baratti as an expert in gunshot wounds in the head. Agents of the Board of Medical Examiners, after investigation, arrested Lampe for practicing medicine without a license. According to press reports, this "doctor's" "only experience with gunshot wounds was that he shot himself in the head some fifteen years ago, and that the bullet still lodges in the brain." He claimed that he had practiced cosmetic surgery in San Francisco for twenty years. 'Tis said that the mills of the gods grind slowly, but surely they are more speedy than those of the law.